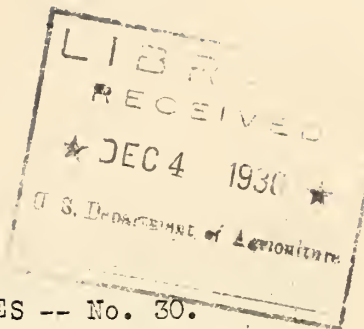


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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLIES -- No. 30.

November, 24, 1930.

A radio talk by W. R. M. Wharton, Chief of the Eastern District, Federal Food and Drug Administration, delivered Monday mornings at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, through station WJZ, New York, and associated National Broadcasting Company stations.

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Good morning, my radio friends. You know, do you not, that I am your Government representative. I come to you each week at this hour, representing the United States Department of Agriculture, to tell you how your foods and drugs are safeguarded through the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs act and to tell you how to read food and drug labels in order that you may protect yourselves and become discriminating, careful and economical buyers.

A few years ago, I learned that packers of white potatoes in a certain section of the country were grossly misusing U. S. Grade designations on their labels. As I shall tell you in detail later in this talk, the United States Department of Agriculture through its Bureau of Agricultural Economics has established grade specifications and special grade names for potatoes in order that the business of dealing in potatoes may be placed on an equitable basis and in order that all buyers may know the quality of the product received. But let me go on with my story. From a certain section where potatoes are largely grown, shipments were being made in bags labeled "Potatoes, U. S. Grade No. 1," which contained potatoes of all sizes, potatoes which were largely defective and often with large quantities of loose and adhering dirt. These potatoes were not "U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes," but a lower grade, and of a much lower value than U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes. In other words, these potatoes were misbranded. The label on them, "U. S. Grade No. 1," was a lie, a fraud, and a cheat intended to secure more money for the packers than they were entitled to get for such goods and to cause you, Mr. and Mrs. Consumer, to pay more money than you should pay for that grade of potatoes.

The potatoes are misbranded and the misbranding of any food product is a violation of the Food and Drugs Act. A party of inspectors proceeded immediately to the locality where this practice was being carried on and made an investigation. Your inspectors found that the packers had bought a large supply of bags, all labeled "Potatoes U. S.

Grade No. 1," and the workmen in the fields were filling these bags with piles of potatoes just as they were dug. They were not only including small potatoes, defective potatoes, potatoes with adhering dirt, but they also included a plentiful supply of loose soil.

Your inspectors then went to the railroad shipping point and began examining cars of potatoes after they were loaded and ready for interstate shipment. They found the bags labeled "Potatoes, U. S. Grade No. 1." They found small, damaged and defective potatoes in the bags. Besides, many bags contained large quantities of dirt. These cars of potatoes were shipped in interstate commerce and thus became subject to the terms of the Federal food and drugs act and, when they were shipped, a violation of this law occurred. The terms of the Food and Drugs Act were invoked and eight car lots were seized on the charge that the potatoes were misbranded in that they were labeled "Potatoes, U. S. Grade No. 1" when the potatoes were not of this grade, or of any grade, but were field-run potatoes largely defective and containing dirt. This activity effectively caused the discontinuance of the misbranding of potatoes in this particular locality. Indeed, for the rest of that particular shipping season, these potato packers used unlabeled bags to make their shipments and they took the further precaution of removing all extraneous material from their potatoes.

Now for my read-the-label information. I shall tell you how to read labels on potatoes and how to buy potatoes according to grades. Have you been in the habit of asking your grocer for a peck of potatoes and accepting any kind he happened to give you, or have you been insisting upon buying by grade? Besides the Federal Grades, which have been established by the United States Department of Agriculture, many of the States have established grades for potatoes and now in the wholesale trade, at least, nearly all potatoes are sold by grades. A large percentage of the containers, barrels and bags, are marked with grade designations, either State or Federal or both, and by the way, the majority of the States have adopted the U. S. Grades. Only a few of the States have grades of their own which differ from the Federal Grades and these do not differ in any material degree.

Now I may as well say at the outset that these grade designations ordinarily are applied to the wholesale container, the sack or barrel, and I realize, too, that few housewives buy potatoes in these original shipping containers. Occasionally, however, you housewives do buy by the sack, and not infrequently your grocer serves you out of the sack or barrel in which he has received the potatoes. For that reason, I don't think it amiss for you to have accurate information about what these Federal Grade designations stand for.

There are three Federal Grades for potatoes. These are (1) U. S. Fancy Potatoes, (2) U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes, and (3) U. S. Grade No. 2 Potatoes.

U. S. Fancy Potatoes must be of one variety and must be mature, bright, well shaped, free from freezing injury, soft rot, dirt or other foreign matter, free from sunburn, growth cracks, hollow heart, cut, scab, blight, dry rot, or any insect or mechanical injury or disease, and free from second growths and all other defects. In no case shall the diameter be less than 2 inches, but the minimum diameter or minimum weight or range in diameter or weight may be stated on the label following the grade name. Certain tolerances below these qualifications are allowed, as follows, no more than 5% by weight of any lot may vary from the size stated and in addition not more than 6% by weight of any lot may be below the remaining requirements of the grade but not to exceed 1% shall be allowed to be affected by soft rot. You will note that the requirements for this grade are very exacting indeed. The fact is that only a very, very limited quantity of U. S. Fancy Potatoes appear on the market.

The next U. S. Grade for potatoes is "U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes" and the vast proportion of potatoes sold are under this grade designation. The requirements for U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes are that the potatoes shall be of similar varietal characteristics and not badly misshapen; free from freezing and soft rot and from damage caused by dirt and other foreign matter, sunburn, second growth, growth cracks, hollow heart, cuts, scab, blight, dry rot, disease, insects or mechanical or other means. The diameters of potatoes of this grade in round varieties are not allowed to be less than $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches and of potatoes of long varieties not less than $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, but lots of potatoes which are not less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter which meet the remaining requirements of this grade may be designated "U.S. Grade No. 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches minimum." In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 5% by weight of any lot may be below the prescribed size. In addition, not more than 5% by weight may be damaged by hollow heart and not more than 6% may be below the remaining requirements of this grade, but not more than 1% of this amount shall be allowed for potatoes affected with soft rot.

Soft rot or other deterioration developing in transit on potatoes otherwise up to grade shall be considered as affecting the condition and not the grade.

The third and last U. S. Grade is U. S. Grade No. 2 Potatoes. The requirements for this grade are that the potatoes shall be of similar varietal characteristics, and free from freezing injury and soft rot, and from serious damage caused by sunburn, second growth, growth cracks, hollow heart, cuts, scab, blight, dry rot, disease, insects, or mechanical, or other means. The diameter of potatoes of this grade shall not be less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The tolerance allowance from these specifications is that not more than 5% by weight of any lot may be below the prescribed size and, in addition, not more than 6% by weight may be below the remaining requirements of the grade. Not more than 1% is allowed to be affected by soft rot.

Now let us see what the differences are between Grade No. 1 and No. 2. U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes may not be badly misshapen; U. S. Grade No. 2 may be badly misshapen. U. S. No. 1 Potatoes are required to be free from damage caused by the various conditions named, whereas U. S. Grade No. 2 are only required to be free from serious damage. U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes are required to have an average diameter of $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches for round varieties and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches for long varieties, while Grade No. 2 are not required to be larger than $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. However, remember that U. S. Grade No. 1 may have an average diameter of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches as a minimum if the lot meets all the other requirements of Grade No. 1 and the label states "U. S. Grade No. 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches minimum." In the case of U. S. Grade No. 1 Potatoes, 6% may be below the requirements of the grade other than size and, in addition, 5% may be damaged by hollow heart; but in the case of U. S. No. 2 Grade, 6% defective stock is allowed to be seriously damaged, all of which may be hollow heart. These differences, my friends, are material. So material that they result in quite a considerable difference in price. In general, No. 2 Potatoes sell for one-half the price asked for No. 1 Potatoes. Therefore, do you not see why it is necessary for you to know the grade of the potatoes you are buying in order that you may pay the price for the grade that you get?

Potatoes are often sold by name of location or state of production and these designations have a value to the label reader as indicating quality. For example, in the greater New York Metropolitan area, Long Island potatoes are preferred by most housewives and there is a reason, because in general, Long Island potatoes are of superior quality. In New England, Maine potatoes are shown the preference, and there is a reason, for Maine potatoes are of superior quality. In a large portion of the United States, Idaho potatoes are preferred---especially for baking purposes---and there is a reason, because Idaho potatoes are of a superior quality for baking purposes. In certain sections of the Northwest, Michigan potatoes are considered superior. This does not mean that other States do not produce superior potatoes also. All States produce good potatoes, and when these are purchased according to government grades, it is desirable that they be found to be of the quality indicated by the grade designation.

I want to add this final word of caution to my discussion of the meaning of the U. S. Grade designations for potatoes. As a rule, potatoes are graded and labeled at the point of shipment. And usually they may be expected to conform reasonably well with grade designations when they reach their destinations. But occasionally unavoidable delays---resulting in some deterioration---may affect somewhat the condition of potatoes by the time they reach the retail distributor. I mention this merely because it is always wise for the housekeeper to combine intelligent label reading with good judgment when she purchases a commodity of a perishable kind.

My friends, do you know that 60 pounds of potatoes make one bushel. If you buy a peck of potatoes, you should get 15 pounds. It is important to check your weights on all food products purchased. You should

know that potatoes are packed often in 100-pound bags, sometimes in 120-pound bags, and frequently in 150-pound bags. When you buy a bag of potatoes, read the label to see what weight you get. Potatoes are also packed in U. S. Standard Barrels. These hold 165 pounds or 2-3/4 bushels. They are labeled generally "One U. S. Standard Barrel."

In one of my earlier talks, I encouraged the formation of Read-the-Label Committees in Community Clubs and I am gratified to learn from the letters I have received that this idea has been adopted by literally hundreds of the women's clubs of the country. The subject of how to read labels is being studied seriously by club women in order that they may reap the advantage which will result from becoming intelligent label-readers and the earnestness with which women all over the country are learning to read labels promises to give the consumers of the Nation the buying knowledge they have long needed. Let me tell you what a prominent trade journal recently said about my read-the-label broadcasts. It said that Mr. Wharton knows what he is talking about and that therefore his utterances are listened to and followed. The journal said that he is driving home that long needed advice to know what you are buying and to read labels. This paper said to the canning industry: you will make a very great mistake if you think these talks will not have a very decided effect on millions of good buyers, who from now on will begin to study the wording on labels to see what they are buying. And the journal stated that Mr. Wharton has millions of listeners who are beginning to demand plain statements of facts on labels, and if the canners are ashamed to say what is in the can, the consumer has a right to distrust the product and keep away from it.

My friends, I want you to remember that I have already told you how to read labels on a wide variety of food products. These talks include label reading on tea, flour, vinegar, lard, oysters, cheese, eggs, butter and many other products. I have talked on vitamins and their importance in the diet. I have told you about Botulism, a serious form of food poisoning and how to safeguard against it.

Do you want to become a careful and intelligent buyer? Do you want to know the composition of the foods you use? Do you want to save money in your marketing? If you do, you will avail yourself of the opportunity that you have to secure free copies of all my read-the-label talks. All you have to do is to write to W.R.M. Wharton, F. & D. Administration, 201 Varick Street, New York City.

